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PIPES OF PAN

NO. V

FROM THE BOOK OF VALENTINES

BY

BLISS CARMAN

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BY

BLISS CARMAN

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PIPES OF PAN

Number Five

FROM THE

BOOK OF VALENTINES

BY

BLISS CARMAN

AUTHOR OF "PIPES OF PAN," "SAPPHO," "THE KINSHIP OF NATURE," "THE FRIENDSHIP OF ART," ETC.



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BALLAD OF THE YOUNG KING'S MADNESS.

In a Kingdom long ago, as the story comes to me,
There lived a sturdy folk by the borders of the sea;
The snow-tipped mountains behind them guarding the East and the North,
While open to Southward and Westward, were the sea-gates bidding them forth.

Launching their boats through the breakers, casting their nets in the tide,
The sea had given them daring, strength and endurance and pride;
Watching their sheep with the eagles on many a lonely hill,

The stars had given them knowledge and insight
and ghostly skill;
For wisdom comes to the waiting as water comes
to a mill,
From unsluiced sources of silence where the chat-
ter of life grows still.

I.

Over this sturdy people there ruled without
favour or greed
A man with the arm and heart of the olden
kingly breed.
There was never a sport nor contest, there was
never a horse to tame,
But the King would meet all comers, and was
ever first in the game.
A speaker of truth to all men, he carried his will
with a word;
And Justice dwelt in his borders, nor ever un-
sheathed her sword.

Likable, open and reckless, he neither bullied nor feared,
When over the rim of his empire threatening danger appeared,
But in the face of his council laughed in his yellow beard.

Yet his light-heart ways were a scandal to the seemly and the sage,
He would turn from the weightiest business to rally a love-sick page,
Twitting him for a laggard, making him blush with a jest,
Shaming him for a waster by the good wine spilt on his vest.

Never a band of minstrels passed, but he bade them in,
Haling the lads by the shoulder, taking the maids by the chin;

Till the courtyard gleamed with motley, and the palace rang with din.

Courtiers lived on his bounty, lights-of-love supped at his board.
Merry the time he gave them, priceless the wine he poured,
Lavish of all his substance for the gay and careless horde;
Till long lips groaning abhorrence had evil things to foretell.
But always the children loved him, and the women — passing well.

II.

So time wore on, and the King awoke one day with a start,
To hear a strange new whisper of discontent in his heart.

Pleasure he had in plenty, health, and companions, and power;
Yet what is all this life but a void and empty hour?

Fair was the golden morning with April over the hill.
He strolled to the gate of the palace and stood there grave and still,
Watching the mountain shadows, then shut his teeth on his will.
" Bring me a horse," he ordered. They saddled his favourite bay;
And down through the watered valley the young King rode away;
Down through the flowery orchards, where the river babbles and shines,
Past ford and smithy and farm, and up where the narrowing lines

Of tillage and pasture vanish in the dusk of the purple pines.
How speculation and rumour fluttered his folk that day!
" Who can fathom his fancies? Mad as a hare! " said they.

In a cleft of the solemn mountains, like a thought in earth's green heart,
Stood a hospice of recluse men, quiet, secluded, apart,
Having forgotten the world and left distraction behind,
For care of the troublous want and hunger of the mind.

There as the night was falling, the King on his red mare came,
And they have welcomed the stranger, asking not station nor name.

Who bides at the house of God needs neither
money nor fame.

Never an eyelid flickered, never a word betrayed
They knew the habit and bearing accustomed to
be obeyed;
But after the rule of their order, equal in every-
thing,
With kingly love for a brother the brothers served
their King.

They gave him his seat at table, cell and habit
and stall.
The scanty fare and the hours of prayer, meekly
he took them all;
Nor ever they found him wanting in duties great
or small.

Lowly he sat before them and many a lecture
heard,

Questioned and reasoned and listened, argued,
proved and conferred,
And by many a lonely candle pondered the printed
word.

Daily the power of knowledge grew and spread
in his face;
Daily the look of the scholar glowed with a finer
trace;
Daily the tan-flush faded and ever he grew in
grace,
As understanding within him climbed to her law-
ful place.

So from the man of sinew they made a student
at last,
Thoughtful and grave as he had been brave; till,
lo, three years had passed,
And the young King yawned one day, stretching
himself in the sun,

And murmured: "Now let's see what their book-
learning has done!
The arms grow feeble, alack! The foot and eye
grow slow;
Let's put their lore to the test. Good friends,
this day I go."

So said, so done. Mused the Brothers, watching
him down the hill:
"Feeble must be our virtue, if this hope comes to
ill."
They saw him lost in dust; and the sundown's
dying rose
Kindled their lofty hill-crest in its eternal snows.

III.

Now well the Kingdom prospered while the
young King was away,
For wise were the heads of his council, leaders
of men in their day,

Stubborn at fronting clamour, strong to govern
and sway,
Of tested honour and flawless tried in the world's
assay.

Yet there was joy at his coming, throngs that
laughed with delight,
Cheers as he passed and waving, children held in
his sight,
Flags hung out at the windows, and bonfires lit
in the night.
Comrades met on the corner, cronies talked in
the door,
"The merry times are returning; we shall have
revels once more."

But they reckoned without their host, if they
thought the glorious days
Of the King's wild youth had returned with their
drinking and masques and plays.

Sober he sat at council, wisely he judged and decreed,
Till the frivolous gaped and muttered: "A paragon indeed!"

Tireless, toiling and thoughtful, steadfast, kingly and tall,
But lonely he lived, unloving, blameless before them all,
With never a rose in his bower nor a bosom-friend in his hall.

And ever his brow grew whiter, his eye more hungry bright,
For the blessing of peace escaped him, though he toiled by day and night.
By lamplight and daylight he laboured, till his visage grew lean and grim,
While his people saw and wondered, and their hearts went out to him.

So he strove for a year or more, and never was seen to fail
In the least or the greatest matter where diligence might avail.
Yet ever he grew more restless, and ever his cheek more pale.

IV.

Now it chanced on another morning like that when he rode away,
The King must come to his seaboard, where a foreign galleon lay,
Black hull and gleaming canvas, with her decks in trim array;
Long and graceful and speedy as a flying fish was she,
Showing the scarlet pennon of the gypsies of the sea.

There in a dream he stood; watching the surf
and the sand;
Then all of a sudden he laughed, as the rowers
rowed to land.
"God of my fathers," he cried. "What manner
of fool am I?
A landsman all my life, a sea-king will I die."

Needs must they humour him then, whispering,
"Mad once more!"
As they heard him speak to the sailors, and saw
him rowed from the shore.
Small room to parley or caution, and smaller use
to deplore;
When a strong man comes to his stronghold, fate
must yield him the door.

Lightly he stood in the boat, when the bending
rowers rowed;

And the wind and the tide and the sun freshened
and sparkled and glowed.
There lay the sea before him fair as an open road.

Last they saw of the King was at the helmsman's
side,
Gay in the light of adventure, while the vessel
swung on the tide.
With a song they hove her anchor; the sails
drew taut and free;
And she heeled to the wind and lessened on the
long blue slope of the sea.

v.

The sun came up, the sun went down, the tide
drew out and in,
But never a word that seaport heard from for-
eigner or kin,
Rower, merchant, or sailorman, or the gypsies of
the sea,

Whither their prince had vanished, or what his
fate might be;
Till a thousand suns had circled, and twice a
thousand tides
Had swung the swaying harbour buoys and
brimmed through the channel guides.

Then through a winter twilight when the sun
was a disk of red,
The keen-eyed watcher beheld, as he gazed from
the harbour-head,
A moving speck like a seahawk crossing that targe
of flame;
And beating up from the sea-rim the gypsy
galleon came.

And why is she decked with pennons, and
trimmed with cloth of gold?
And what are these scarlet trappings the harbour
folk behold?

What means her glory of banners fluttering on
the breeze,
Brave as the coloured autumn that is the pride
of the trees?
Has she rifled a sea-king's treasure and plundered
the isles of the seas?

Slowly she passed the entry, the white sails low-
ered and furled,
And there was our long-lost truant from the
other side of the world.
On the deck he stood, the figure of a man to
make men bold,
A browned and hardy master, as debonair as of
old,
The strength of his hands as aforetime, the
scholar's light on his brow,
But something passing knowledge in his look and
bearing now,

The calm of a radiant purpose, the joy of unerring quest,
The poise of perfected being when the soul attains her best.
He had ruled with power and pleasure, he had searched and found out lore;
And now his unfainting spirit had discovered the one thing more.

But the curious eye forsook him to greet with amazed regard
Another who stood at the taffrail by the sheet of the great main-yard;
Fine as a mast in stature, eager, unflinching, and free,
With hair like the sun's raw gold and eyes like crumbs of the sea;
Straight-browed — the imperial bearing of one who is born to sway,

Deep-bosomed with all the ardour that kindles
our wondrous clay;
Regent of glad dominions, a sea-trove out of the
vast
Wide welter of life. "A hostage fit for our king
at last!"

Threefold is the search for perfection that leads
through creation's plan —
Through immemorial nature and the restless
heart of man;
Beauty of shape and colour to gladden and profit
the eye,
Truth beyond cavil or question to answer the
reason why,
And the blameless spirit's portion — the joy that
shall not die.

The dauntless soul must wander to accomplish
and attain

This balance of all her powers by the lead of
love, or remain
A stranger to peace forever in sorrow, defeat, and
pain.

Flushed with the cheers of welcome, lightly the
king, all pride,
Handed the girl, all beauty, over the vessel's side.
Then in a lull of their salvos, to the wondering
crowd that rings
The pierhead, eager to question, "Our queen,"
said the sanest of kings.

ACROSS THE COURTYARD.

That is the window over there
With the closed shutters and the air
Of a deserted place, like those
Abandoned homesteads whose repose
Haunts us with mystery. Inside
Who knows what tragedy may hide?

This window has been sealed up so
A fortnight now. A month ago
Just about dusk you should have seen
The vision I saw smile and lean
From that same window. Spring's return,
When daffodils and jonquils burn
Under the azure April day,
Is not more lovely nor more gay.

The world — at least, our artist world
Where tubes are pinched and brushes twirled
In the long task to reproduce
God's masterpieces for man's use —
Knows Jacynth for the loveliest
Of all its models and the best.
Why, half the portraits in the town,
From Mrs. Bigwig, Jr.'s down,
Have that same perfect taper hand.
(If you have wit to understand
A woman's vanity, you know
Why they should wish to have it so),
Those same long fingers smooth and round,
Faultless as petals, and not found
Twice in a generation. Well,
They're Jacynth's. But you need not tell
The trick. In this world art must live
On what the world's caprice will give.

Delightful folly! But far more
Delightful beauty we adore
And follow humbly day by day,
Her difficult, enchanted way.
(Dear beauty, still beyond the reach
Of paint, or music, or of speech!)
We toil and triumph and despair,
Then on a morn look up, and there
Some girl goes by, or there's a dash
Of colour on the clouds — a flash
Of inspiration caught between
Chinks in the workshop's grey routine.
One hint of glory through the murk,
And God has criticized our work.

So we plod on, and so one day
It happened toward the end of May,
When the long twilight comes, and when
Our northern orchards bloom again —
Even our poor old courtyard tree,

Knowing the time that bids him be
One of the hosts that leaf and sing
In the revival of the spring,
Dons his green robe of joy. You know
How idle, then, a man will grow.
I had been sitting lost in thought
Of how our best dreams come to naught,
And we are left mere daubers still
For want of knowledge, lack of skill —
So many of us are, I mean!
The door was open, and the screen
And curtains turned back everywhere
For the first breath of summer air,
That came in like a wanderer
From far untroubled lands, to stir
The prints along the wall, and bring
Our dreams of greatness back with spring.

Suddenly, I looked up, aware
Before I looked, of some one there —

You know how. In the doorway stood
A tall girl dressed in black. How good
A scrap of actual beauty is,
After our unrealities!
The copper-coloured hair; the glint
Of tea-rose in her throat's warm tint;
The magic and surprise that go
With level blue-grey eyes; the slow
Luxurious charm of poise and line,
Half-Oriental, half-divine,
And altogether human. Oh,
One must have known her then, to know
How faultless beauty still transcends
The bound where faultless painting ends.
But you may gather here and there
Faint glimpses and reports of her
In the best work of all the men
Who painted her as she was then,
Splendid and wonderful. To me,
For colour and for symmetry,

In her young glory there she seemed
The flame-like one of whom they dreamed
Who worshipped beauty in old days
With singleness of joy and praise;
Some great Astarte come to bless
This old world with new loveliness;
My own ideal come to life,
After the failure and the strife,
To prove I dreamed not all in vain
In poverty beside the Seine.

There came a sudden leap at heart
That made my pulses stop and start,
The surge and flood of sense that sweep
Over our nature's hidden deep,
When we look up and recognize
Our vision in an earthly guise.
Then reason must resign control
To the indubitable soul,

Put off despair, arise and dance
To the joy-music of romance.

For one great year she posed for me;
Came in and out familiarly,
And made the studio her home
Almost — not quite; for always some —
What shall I say? — reserve or pride,
Mysterious and aloof, belied
By the soft loving languorous mien,
Invested her, enthroned serene
Above importunings. Who knows,
If she had chosen as I chose —
Flung heart and head and hand away
On the great venture of a day;
Poured love and passion and romance
In the frail mould of circumstance —
Had she but dared be one of two,
We might have made the world anew!
However much it might have cost,

Who knows what good may have been lost,
What passing great reward?

One day
When work was done she turned to say
Her soft good night, and tripped down-stair
With rustling skirts and her fine air
Of breeziness, humming a catch
From some street-song. I heard the latch
Click after her, and she was gone.
Next day I waited. It wore on
To afternoon, and still no sign
Of peril near this dream of mine.
A year went by, and not a word
Of the lost Jacynth could be heard.

May came again; the wind once more
Was blowing by the open door,
And I saw something over there
Across the yard that made me stare.

Strangers had recently arrived
On that third floor, and Fate contrived
One of her small dramatic scenes
Which make us wonder what life means,
And whether it is all a play
For our diversion by the way.
There at the window I caught sight
Of a girl's figure. The crisp white
Of the fresh gown passed and repassed,
Strangely familiar, till at last,
"Jacynth, of course! Who else?" I cried.
And on the instant she espied
Me watching her; quick as a flash
And smiling, ran, threw up the sash
To lean far out. "How do you do,
My friend?" "Why, Jacynth, how are you,
After this long, long time?" I said.
"Thank you, quite well." Her pretty head
Was tilted up, in every line
An old medallion rare and fine.

"Yes, it's a long time, isn't it,
Since that first day I came to sit
For your great Lilith? Tell me how
They hung it at the Fair. And now
That we are neighbours once again,
Do come to see me." It was plain
From the unwonted vanity
Of tone, as she ran on to me,
Some strange ambition, plan, or hope
Had come to give her pride new scope.
Somehow she had acquired the chill
Of worldliness; I missed the thrill
Of eager radiance she had
When we were comrades free and glad.
Some volatile and subtle trace
Of soul had vanished from her face,
Leaving the brilliancy that springs
From polished and enamelled things.
The beauty of the lamp still shone
With lustre, but the flame was gone.

There was so evident in her
The smug complacent character
Of prosperous security,
That when, with just a flick at me,
She added, gaily as before,
"It isn't Jacynth any more,
It's Mrs." — some one — here was I,
Too much astonished to reply,
Before she vanished. From that day
The rest is blank, think what you may.
There is her window, as you see,
Closed on a teasing mystery.

I think, as I recall her here,
How much life means beyond the mere
Safety, convenience, and the pose
Respectability bestows;
The beauty of the questing soul
In every face, beyond control
Is dimmed by wearing any mask

That dull conformity may ask.
How almost no one understands
The unworldliness that art demands!
How few have courage to retain
Through years of doubtful stress and strain
The resolute and lonely will
To follow beauty, to fulfil
The dreams of their prophetic youth
And pay the utmost price of truth!
How few have nerve enough to keep
The trail, and thread the dark and steep
By the lone lightning-flash that falls
Through sullen murky intervals!
How many faint of heart must choose
The steady lantern for their use,
And never, without fear of Fate,
Be daring, generous and great!

Where is she now? What sudden change
Clouded our day-dream? Love is strange!

A NEIGHBOUR'S CREED.

"Nor knowest thou what argument
Thy life to thy neighbour's creed has lent."

I.

All day the weary crowds move on
Through the grey city's stifling heat,
With anxious air, with jaded mien,
To strife, to labour, to defeat.

But I possess my soul in calm,
Because I know, unvexed by noise,
Somewhere across the city's hum
Your splendid spirit keeps its poise.

II.

Because I see you bright and brave,
I say to my despondent heart,
"Up, loiterer! Put off this guise
Of gloom, and play the sturdier part!"

Three things are given man to do:
To dare, to labour, and to grow.
Not otherwise from earth we came,
Nor otherwise our way we go.

Three things are given man to be:
Cheerful, undoubting, and humane,
Surviving through the direst fray,
Preserving the untarnished strain.

Three things are given man to know:
Beauty and truth and honour. These
Are the nine virtues of the soul,
Her mystic powers and ecstasies.

And when I see you bravely tread
That difficult and doubtful way,
"Up, waverer; wilt thou forsake
Thy comrade?" to my soul I say.

Then bitterness and sullen fear,
Mistrust and anger, are no more.
That quick gay step is in the hall;
That rallying voice is at the door.

TO ONE IN DESPAIR.

I.

O die not yet, great heart; but deign
A little longer to endure
This life of passionate fret and strain,
Of slender hope and joy unsure!

Take Contemplation by the sleeve,
And ask her, " Is it not worth while
To teach my fellows not to grieve, —
To lend them courage in a smile?

" Is it so little to have made
The timorous ashamed of fear, —
The idle and the false afraid
To front existence with a sneer? "

For those who live within your sway
Know not a mortal fear, save one, —
That some irreparable day
They should awake, and find you gone.

II.

Live on, love on! Let reason swerve;
But instinct knows her own great lore,
Like some uncharted planet's curve
That sweeps in sight, then is no more.

Live on, love on, without a qualm,
Child of immortal charity,
In the great certitude and calm
Of joy free-born that shall not die.

III.

We dream ourselves inheritors
Of some unknown and distant good,

That shall requite us for the faults
Of our own lax ineptitude.

But soon and surely they may come,
Whom love makes wise and courage free,
Into their heritage of joy, —
Their earth-day of eternity.

IV.

The thought that I could ever call
Your name, and you would not be here,
At moments sweeps my soul away
In the relentless tide of fear;

Then from its awful ebb returns
The sea of gladness strong and sure.
By this I know that love is great;
By this I know I shall endure.

V.

When I shall have lain down to sleep,
I pray no sound to break my rest.
No seraph's trumpet through the night
Could touch my weary soul with zest.

But oh, beyond the reach of thought
How I should waken and rejoice,
To hear across the drift of time
One golden echo of your voice!

AT THE GREAT RELEASE.

When the black horses from the house of Dis
Stop at my door and the dread charioteer
Knocks at my portal, summoning me to go
On the far solitary unknown way
Where all the race of men fare and are lost,
Fleeting and numerous as the autumnal leaves
Before the wind in Lesbos of the Isles;

Though a chill draught of fear may quell my soul
And dim my spirit like a flickering lamp
In the great gusty hall of some old king,
Only one mordant unassuaged regret,
One passionate eternal human grief,

Would wring my heart with bitterness and tears
And set the mask of sorrow on my face.

Not youth, nor early fame, nor pleasant days,
Nor flutes, nor roses, nor the taste of wine,
Nor sweet companions of the idle hour
Who brought me tender joys, nor the glad sound
Of children's voices playing in the dusk;
All these I could forget and bid good-bye
And pass to my oblivion nor repine.

Not the green woods that I so dearly love,
Nor summer hills in their serenity,
Nor the great sea mystic and musical,
Nor drone of insects, nor the call of birds,
Nor soft spring flowers, nor the wintry stars;
To all the lovely earth that was my home
Smiling and valiant I could say farewell.

But not, oh, not to one strong little hand,
To one droll mouth brimming with witty words,
Nor ever to the unevasive eyes
Where dwell the light and sweetness of the world
With all the sapphire sparkle of the sea!
Ah, Destiny, against whose knees we kneel
With prayer at evening, spare me this one woe!

MORNING AND EVENING.

When the morning wind comes up the mountain,
Stirring all the beech-groves of the valley,
And, before the paling stars have vanished,
The first tawny thrush disturbs the twilight
With his reed-pipe, eerie calm and golden —
The earth-music marvellous and olden —

Then good fortune enters at my doorway,
And my heart receives the guest called Gladness;
For I know it is that day of summer
When I shall behold your face ere nightfall,
And this earth, as never yet in story,
Ledge to hill-crest dyed in purple glory.

When the evening breath draws down the valley,
And the clove is full of dark blue shadows
Moving on the mountain-wall, just silvered
By the large moon lifted o'er the earth-rim,
At the moment of transported being,
When soul gathers what the eyes are seeing,

Sense is parted like a melted rain-mist,
And our mortal spirits run together,
Saying, "O incomparable comrade!"
Saying, "O my lover, how good love is!"
Then the twilight falls; the hill-wind hushes;
Note by note once more the cool-voiced thrushes.

IN AN IRIS MEADOW.

Once I found you in an iris meadow
Down between the seashore and the river,
Playing on a golden willow whistle
You had fashioned from a bough in springtime, —
Piping such a wild melodious music,
Full of sunshine, sadness and sweet longing,
As the heart of earth must have invented,
When the wind first breathed above her bosom,
And above the sea-rim, silver-lighted,
Pure and glad and innocent and tender,
The first melting planets glowed in splendour.

There it was I loved you as a lover,
Then it was I lost the world forever.

For your slender fingers on the notches
Set free more than that mere earthly cadence,—
Loosed the piercing stops of mortal passion, —
Touched your wood-mate with the spell of wonder,
And the godhead in the man awakened.
Virgin spirit with unsullied senses,
There was earth for him all new-created,
In a moment when the music's rapture
Bade soul take what never thought could capture:

Just the sheer glad bliss of being human,
Just the large content beyond all reason,
Just the love of flowers, hills and rivers,
Shadowy forests and lone lovely bird-songs
When the morning brightens in the sea-wind;
And beyond all these the fleeting vision
Of the shining soul that dwelt within you,
(Magic fragrance of the meadow blossom)
All the dear fond madness of the lover.

These, all these the ancient wood-god taught me
From the theme you piped and the wind brought me.

Was it strange that I should stop the playing?
Was it strange that I should touch the blossom?
Must (a man's way!) see whence came the music,
Must with childish marvel count the petals?
O but sweet were your uncounted kisses!
Wild and dear those first impulsive fondlings,
When your great eyes swept me, then went seaward,
Too o'ercharged to bear the strain of yearning,
And the little head must seek this shoulder!
Then we heard once more the wood-god's measure,
And strange gladness filled the world's great leisure.

A LETTER FROM LESBOS.

More beloved than ever yet was mortal!
Oh, but doubt not, lover, I do love thee!
When he wrote these words, bitter and lonely
Was that tender heart in wintry Lesbos.
Kindly gods but speed my journey thither,
(How the wind burns from the scorching desert,
Through the scarlet beds of scentless blossom!)
And make fortunate that swift home-coming!
For I fret in this Egyptian exile,
Too long parted, sickening for the home-wind
And the first white gleam of Mitylene.

Blessed words to brave the stormy sea-way!
In this stifling city's sultry languor

I must now with joy and tears and longing,
Now the hundredth time at least re-read them:

It is the bitter season of the year;
The mournful-piping sea-wind is abroad
With driving snow and battle in the air,
Shaking the stubborn rooftree gust by gust;
And under the frost-grey skies without a sun
Cold desolation wraps the wintry world.

And I, my Gorgo, keep the fireside here,
Chill-hearted, brooding, visited by doubt,
Wondering how Demeter or wise Pan
Will work the resurrection of the spring,
Serene and punctual at the appointed time,
With the warm sun, the swallows at the eaves,
The slant of rain upon the purple hill,
The flame-like crocus by the garden wall,
The light, the hope, the gladness all returned
With maidens singing the Adonis song!

But ah, more doubtful sad and full of fear
There comes to me, disconsolate and lone,
The thought of thee, my Gorgo, lovelier
Than any premonition of the spring.

I seem to see that radiant smile once more,
The heaven-blue eyes, the crocus-golden hair,
The rose-pink beauty passionate and tall,
Dear beyond words and daring with desire,
For which thy lover would fling life away
And traffic the last legacy of time.

Ah, Gorgo, too long absent, well I know
The sun will shine again and spring come back
Her ancient glorious golden-flowered way,
And gladness visit the green earth once more,
But where in all that wonder wilt thou be,
The very soul and spirit of the spring?

If the high gods in that triumphant time
Have calendared no day for thee to come
Light-hearted to this doorway as of old,
Unmoved I shall behold their pomps go by,—
The painted seasons in their pageantry,
The silvery processions of the moon,
And all the infinite ardours unsubdued,
Pass with the wind replenishing the earth.

Incredulous forever I must live,
And, once thy lover, without joy behold
The gradual uncounted years go by,
Sharing the bitterness of all things made.

Ah, not thus! My hot tears sweet and tender,
And the storm within this heaving bosom,
Could he see, would tell him what the truth is,—
How the heart of Gorgo breaks to reach him,
And her arms are weak with empty waiting
Through this long monotony of summer.

Gentle spirit, grieve not so, for love's sake!
How he raves beyond the touch of reason:

O heart of mine, be hardier for ills,
Since thou hast shared the sorrows of the gods
And been partaker of their destiny.
Have I not known the bitterness that sighed
In mournful grief upon the river marge,
And once obscured the lonely shining sun,
When Syrinx and when Daphne fled away?
Not otherwise in sorrow did I fare
Whom Gorgo, loveliest of mortals, loved,
And whose own folly that same Gorgo lost.

O lovers, hear me! Be not lax in love,
Nor let the loved one from you for a day.
For time that is the enemy of love,
And change that is the constant foe of man,
But wait the turn of opportunity
To fret the delicate fabric of our life

With doubt and slow forgetfulness and grief,
Till he who was a lover once goes forth
A friendless soul to front the joyless years,
A brooding uncompanioned wanderer
Beneath the silent and majestic stars.

Now what folly waits on brooding passion!
Truly not in solitude do mortals
Reach the height and nobleness of heroes.
Can it be so swiftly fades remembrance?
Oh, my fond heart prompt him! This is better:

The red flower of the fire is on the hearth,
The white flower of the foam is on the sea.
The golden marshes and the tawny dunes
Are gleaming white with snow and flushed with rose
Where the pure level wintry sunlight falls.
In the rose-garden, crimsoning each bough
Against the purple boulders in the wall,

Shine the rose-berries careless of the cold.
While down along the margin of the sea,
Just where the grey beach melts to greener grey,
With mounting wavering combing plunge and
charge,
The towering breakers crumble in to shore.

Now from that quiet picture of the eye,
Hark to the trampling thunder and long boom,
The lone unscansioned and mysterious rote
Whose cadence marked the building of the world,
The old reverberant music of the sea!

Ah, to what ghostly piping of strange flutes
Strays in lost loveliness Persephone,
Heavy at heart, with trouble in her eyes,
From her deep-bosomed mother far away,
In the pale garden of Aidoneus now?
And oh, what delicate piping holds thee, too,
My Kore of the beauteous golden head?

What voice, what luring laughter bid thee stay
So long from thine own lover and so far?
Who touches with soft words thy tender heart,
In some bright foreign city far from here,
My unforgotten Gorgo beautiful?

Doubting still? O bitterest of absence
That the moth of doubt should mar the texture
And fine tissue of the spirit's garment,
The one garb of beauty which the soul wears, —
Love, the frailest, costliest of fabrics!
Ah, doubt not! O lover, lover, lover,
Who first taught the childlike heart of mortals
This most false and evil worldly wisdom?
Blighting as a frost on budded aloes,
How it blackens love, the golden blossom!
Would that I could cherish him this instant,
And dissolve that aching wintry passion
In the warmth of this impatient bosom!
By what cruel fate must I be banished

From his lonely bed? In lovely Lesbos
All my heart is, with its passionate longing.
O too piteous is the lot of women:

In the long night I lie awake for hours
Or sleep the sleep of dreamers without rest.
For in my soul there is discouragement,
And cold remorse lays hands upon my heart.
Now thou art gone, the grey world has no joy,
But bleak and bitter is the wind of life,
Cutting this timid traveller to the bone.

Not all the gods can ever give me peace,
Nor their forgiveness make me glad again,
For I have sinned against my own great soul
And cherished far too little thy great love.
Brave was thy spirit, glad and beautiful,
Nor ever faltered nor was faint of heart
In the fair splendid path of thy desire.
Even as I speak there comes a touch of shame,

Like a friend's hand upon my shoulder laid,
To think such moody and unmanly words
Could ever pass the mouth thy mouth has pressed.

Remembrance wakes. I hear the long far call
To fortitude and courage in the night
From my companions of the mighty past,
All the heroic lovers of the world.

Hast thou not had a sudden thought of me,
Unanxious, gay and tender with desire,
O thou beloved more than all mortal things?
For in my heart there was a sudden sense
Just now with presage of returning joy,
As when the wood-flowers waken to the sun
And all their lovely ardours rearise,
Or when the sinking tide from utmost ebb
With one long sob summons his might once more.

Out of this winter will put forth one day
The incommunicable germ of spring,
The magic fervour that makes all things new,
When all the golden season will be glad
With soft south winds and birds and woodland
flowers
And the shrill marshy music of the frogs,
Piping a chorus to their father Pan.
Then thou and I shall walk the earth once more
Delirious with each other as of old,
And the soft madness lead us far away
By meadowy roads and through the lilac hills
To our own province in the lands of love, —
My new-found Gorgo, heart-throb of the spring.

Heart of me! Ah, Cyprian deal gently!
Soon, Oh soon, restore me to my lover,
That I may repair this outworn habit,
And reclothe him with thy golden glory,
Scarlet circumstance and purple splendour, —

State and air and pride of the immortals,
Which these mortal men, by our devising
And thy favour, wear — with fleeting rapture!
Fiercer blow, thou fervour of the desert!
Northward, northward, you hot winds of Nilus,
More consuming than a smelter's furnace!
You who do the will of alien Isis,
To this heart you cannot be unfriendly,
If I once may loose the sail for Lesbos,
And along the green and foaming sea-track
Scud before you, light as any swallow
Flashing down the long blue slope of springtime.
O ye home-gods, free me to my lover!

THE PLAYERS.

We are the players of a play
As old as earth,
Between the wings of night and day,
With tears and mirth.

There is no record of the land
From whence it came,
No legend of the playwright's hand,
No bruited fame

Of those who for the piece were cast
On that first night,
When God drew up His curtain vast
And there was light.

Before our eyes as we come on,
From age to age,
Flare up the footlights of the dawn
On this round stage.

In front, unknown, beyond the glare
Vague shadows loom;
And sounds like muttering winds are there
Foreboding doom.

Yet wistfully we keep the boards;
And as we mend
The blundering forgotten words,
Hope to the end

To hear the storm-beat of applause
Fill our desire
When the dark Prompter gives us pause,
And we retire.

THE MANSION.

I thought it chill and lonesome,
And too far from the road
For an ideal dwelling,
When here I first abode.

But yesterday a lodger
Smiled as she passed my door,
With mien of gay contentment
That lured me to explore.

Unerringly she leads me,
Compassionate and wise,
Soul of immortal beauty
Wearing the mortal guise.

She knows from sill to attic
The great house through and through,
Its treasures of the ages,
Surprises ever new.

From room to room I follow,
Entranced with each in turn,
Enchanted by each wonder
She bids my look discern.

She names them: here is First-love,
A chamber by the sea;
Here in a flood of noonday
Is spacious Charity.

Here is a cell, Devotion;
And lonely Courage here,
Where child-deserted windows
Look on the Northern year;

Friendship and Faith and Gladness,
Fragrant of air and bloom,
Where one might spend a lifetime
Secure from fear of gloom.

And often as we wander,
I fancy we have neared
The Master of the Mansion,
Who has not yet appeared.

WHO IS THE OWNER?

Who owns this house, my lord or I?
He in whose name the title runs,
Or I, who keep it swept and clean
And open to the winds and suns?

He who is absent year by year,
On some far pleasure of his own,
Or I who spend on it so much
Of willing flesh and aching bone?

What if it prove a fable, all
This rumour of a legal lord,
And we should find ourselves in truth
Owners and masters of the board!

What if this earth should just belong
To those who tend it, you and me!
What if for once we should refuse
His rental to this absentee?

O friends, no landlord in the world
Could love the place as well as I!
Love is the owner of the house,
The only lord of destiny.

THE FAIRY FLOWER.

There's a fairy flower that grows
In a corner of my heart,
And the fragrance that it spills
Is the sorcery of art.

I may give it little care,
Neither water it nor prune,
Yet it suddenly will blow
Glorious beneath the moon.

I may tend it night and day,
Taking thought to make it bloom;
Yet my efforts all will fail
To avert the touch of doom.

When it dies, my little flower,
You may take my life as well;
Though I live a hundred years,
I shall have no more to tell.

YVANHOÉ FERRARA.

Teach me, of little worth, O Fame,
The golden word that shall proclaim
Yvanhoé Ferrara's name.

I would that I might rest me now,
As once I rested long ago,

In the dim purple summer night,
On scented linen cool and white,

Lulled by the murmur of the sea
And thy soft breath, Yvanhoé.

What cared we for the world or time,
Though like a far-off fitful chime,

We heard the mournful anchored bell
Above the sunken reef foretell

That time should pass and pleasure be
No more for us, Yvanhoé!

We saw the crimson sun go down
Across the harbour and the town,

Dyeing the roofs and spars with gold;
But all his magic, ages old,

Was not so wonderful to me
As thy gold hair, Yvanhoé.

Between the window and the road
The tall red poppies burned and glowed;

They moved and flickered like a flame,
As the low sea-wind went and came;

But redder and more warm than they,
Was thy red mouth, Yvanhoé.

I think the stars above the hill
Upon the brink of time stood still;

And the great breath of life that blows
The coal-bright sun, the flame-bright rose,

Entered the room and kindled thee
As in a forge, Yvanhoé —

Prospered the ruddy fire, and fanned
Thy beauty to a rosy brand,

Till all the odorous purple dark
Reeled, and thy soul became a spark

In the great draught of Destiny
Which men call love, Yvanhoé.

The untold ardour of the earth
That knows no sorrow, fear nor dearth,

Before the pent-up moment passed,
Was glad of all its will at last —

And more, if such a thing could be —
In thy long kiss, Yvanhoé.

For years my life was bright and glad,
Because of the great joy we had;

Until I heard the wind repeat
Thy name behind me in the street,

Like a lost lyric of the sea,
"Yvanhoé, Yvanhoé."

But now the day has no desire;
The scarlet poppies have no fire;

There is no magic in the sun
Nor anything he shines upon;

Only the muttering of the sea,
Since thou art dead, Yvanhoé.

Now God on high, be mine the blame,
If time destroy or men defame
Yvanhoé Ferrara's name.

THE LOVE-CHANT OF KING HACKO

In the time of red October,
In the hills of the pointed fir,
In the days of the slanted sunlight
That ripens cone and burr,
God gave me a splendid woman —
A mate for a lord of lands —
And put the madness on me,
And left her there in my hands.

In the roving woodland season,
When the afternoons are still
And the sound of lowing cattle
Comes up to the purple hill,

God would speak to His creatures,
Flower and beast and bird,
And lays the silence upon them
To hearken to His word.

In the time of the scarlet maple,
When the blue Indian haze
Walks through the wooded valley
And sleeps by the mountain ways,
She stood like a beech in the forest,
Where the wash of sunlight lies,
With her wonderful beech-red hair
And her wondering beech-grey eyes.

In the time of the apple harvest,
When the fruit is gold on the bough,
She stood in the moted sunshine,
The orchards remember how —
Loving, untrammelled and generous,
Ardent and supple and tall,

Quick to the breath of the spirit
As a shadow that moves on a wall.

In a yellow and crimson valley,
At the time of the turning leaf,
When warm are the tawny fern-beds,
And the cricket's life is brief,
I saw the dark blood mantle
And prosper under the tan,
Then I knew the power God lent me
To use, when He made me man.

The world, all being and beauty
From meadow to mountain-line,
Awaiting the touch of rapture
For a meaning and a sign;
A woman's voice said, " Hacko,"
Then I knew and could understand
How love is a greater province
Than dominion of sea or land.

In the month of golden hillsides,
When moons are frosty white,
And the returning Hunter
Looms on the marge of night,
Relieving his brother Arcturus,
Belted, majestic and slow,
To patrol the Arctic watch-fires
And sentry the lands of snow,

A core of fire was kindled
On a hearthstone wide and deep,
Where the great arms of the mountains
Put Folly-of-mind to sleep;
We came without guide or knowledge,
Silver, array or store,
Through the land of purple twilight
To the lodge of the Open Door.

THE CREATION OF LILITH.

This happened in the Garden
Ages on ages since,
When noontide made a pleasant shade
Of ilex, pear and quince.

The Gardener sat and pondered
Some beauty rarer still
Than any he had wrought of earth
And fashioned to his will.

"Now who will be her body?"
"I," said the splendid rose,
"Colour, fire and fragrance,
In imperial repose."

"Who will be her two eyes?"
"I," said the flag of blue,
"Sky and sea all shadowy
Drench me wholly through."

"Who will be her bright mouth?"
"I," the carnation said,
"With my old Eastern ardour
And my Persian red."

"Who will be, among you,
The glory of her hair?"
His glance went reaching through the noon;
The marigold was there.

"Who will be her laughter,
Her love-word and her sigh?"
Among the whispering tree-tops
A breath of wind said, "I."

"And whence will come her spirit?"
Answer there was none.
The Gardener breathed upon her mouth,
And lo, there had been done

The miracle of beauty
Outmarvelling the flowers;
While the great blue dial
Recorded the slow hours.

IN A FAR COUNTRY.

In a land that is little traversed,
Beyond the news of the town,
There lies a delectable Kingdom
Where the crimson sun goes down,

The province of fruitlands and flowers
And colour and sea-sounds and love.
If you were queen of that country,
And I were the king thereof,

We should tread upon scarlet poppies,
And be glad the long day through,
Where the bluest skies in the world
Rest upon hills of blue.

We should wander the slopes of the mountains
With the wind and the nomad bee,
And watch the white sails on the sea-rim
Come up from the curving sea.

We should watch from the sides of the valleys
The caravans of the rain,
In trappings of purple and silver,
Go by on the far-off plain.

And they all should be freighted with treasure,
The vision that gladdens the eye,
The beauty that betters the spirit
To sustain it by and by.

We should hear the larks' fine field-notes
Breaking in bubbly swells,
As if from their rocking steeples
The lilies were ringing their bells;

We should hear invisible fingers
Play on the strings of the pines
The broken measure whose motive
Only a lover divines;

The music of Earth, the enchantress,
The cadence that dwells in the heart
Against the time of oblivion,
To bid it remember and start.

And nothing should make us unhappy,
And no one should make us afraid,
For we should be royal lovers
In the land where this plot is laid.

And with night on the almond orchards
We should lie where warm winds creep,
Under the starry tent-cloth
Hearing the footfall of Sleep.

SONG OF THE FOUR WORLDS.

I.

Is it northward, little friend?
And she whispered, "What is there?"

There are people who are loyal to the glory of
their past,
Who held by heart's tradition, and will hold it
to the last;
Who would not sell in shame
The honour of their name,
Though the world were in the balance and a
sword thereon were cast.

Oh, there the ice is breaking, the brooks are
running free,
A robin calls at twilight from a tall spruce-tree,
And the light canoes go down
Past portage, camp and town,
By the rivers that make murmur in the lands
along the sea.

And she said, " It is not there,
Though I love you, love you dear;
I cannot bind my little heart with loves of yes-
ter year."

II.

Is it southward, little friend?
" Lover, what is there? "

There are men of many nations who were sick
of strife and gain,

And only ask forgetfulness of all the old world's pain.
There Life sets down her measure
For Time to fill at leisure
With loveliness and plenty in the islands of the main.

Oh, there the palms are rustling, the oranges are bright;
In all the little harbour towns the coral streets are white;
The scarlet flowers fall
By the creamy convent wall,
And the Southern Cross gets up from sea to steer the purple night.

And she said, " It is not there,
Though I love you, love you dear;
I should weary of the beauty that is changeless all the year."

III.

Is it eastward, little friend?
And she whispered, "What is there?"

There are rivers good for healing, there are temples in the hills,
There men forsake desire and put by their earthly wills;
And there the old earth breeds
Her mystic mighty creeds
For the lifting of all burdens and the loosing of all ills.

Oh, the tents are in the valley where the shadows sleep at noon,
Where the pack-train halts at twilight and the spicy bales are strewn,
Where the long brown road goes by
To the cut against the sky,
And is lost within the circle of the silent, rosy moon.

And she said, " It is not there,
Though I love you, love you dear;
For my faith is warm and living, not unearthly,
old and sere."

IV.

Is it westward, little friend?
" Lover, what is there? "

There are men and women who are sovereigns
of their fate,
Who look Despair between the eyes and know
that they are great;
Who will not halt nor quail
On the eager endless trail,
Till Destiny makes way for them and Love unbars the gate.

Oh, there the purple lilies are blowing in the sun,
And the meadow larks are singing — a thousand,
if there's one!

And the long blue hills arise
To the wondrous dreamy skies,
For the twisted azure columns of the rain to rest upon.

And she said, "It is not there,
For I love you, love you dear.
Oh, shut the door on Sorrow, for the Four Great Worlds are here!"

STREET SONG AT NIGHT.

There's many a quiet seaport that waits the
daring sail;
There's many a lonely farer by many a doubtful
trail.
And what should be their star
To lead them safe and far, —
What guide to take them o'er the crest, what
pilot past the bar, —
Save Love, the great adventurer who will not
turn nor quail?

As a voyager might remember how the face of
earth was changed, —
All the dreary grey of winter forgotten and
estranged, —

When he rode the tempest through
And steered into the blue
Of a tranquil tropic morning diaphanous and new,
With palms upon the sea-rim where the flying-fishes ranged;

As a lover in old story on a night of wind and rain
Might have stood beneath a window, till a lamp should light the pane
And a lady lean one arm
On the glowing square and warm, —
A girlish golden figure in a frame of dark and storm, —
To look the longest moment ere he turned to life again,

Then set a stubborn shoulder to wind and sleet and snow,

With the weather foul above him and the pavement foul below;
So it happened in my case;
When I saw her, every trace
Of doubt and fear and languor to the pulse of joy gave place,
And the world was great and goodly as he planned it long ago.

There's a shipman who goes sailing where the sea is round and high;
There's a lover who goes piping where winds of morning cry;
And the lilt beneath his heart
Was timed to stop and start,
Till no more ships go sailing and the green hills fall apart.
O, friends, that minstrel-lover, that mariner am I.

THE LEAST OF LOVE.

Only let one fair frail woman
Mourn for me when I am dead, —
World, withhold your best of praises!
There are better things instead.

Shall the little fame concern me,
Or the triumph of the years,
When I keep the mighty silence,
Through the falling of her tears?

I shall heed not, though 'twere April
And my field-larks all returned,
When her lips upon these eyelids
One last poppied kiss have burned.

Painted hills shall not allure me,
Mirrored in the painted stream;
Having loved them, I shall leave them,
Busy with the vaster dream.

Only let one dear dark woman
Mourn for me when I am dead,
I shall be content with beauty
And the dust above my head.

Yet when I shall make the journey
From these earthly dear abodes,
I have four things to remember
At the Crossing of the Roads.

How her hand was like a tea-rose;
And her low voice like the South;
Her soft eyes were tarns of sable;
A red poppy was her mouth.

Only let one sweet frail woman
Mourn for me when I am dead, —
Gently for her gentlest lover, —
More than all will have been said.

Be my requiem the rain-wind;
And my immortality
But the lifetime of one heartache
By the unremembering sea!

A MAN'S LAST WORD.

Death said to me,
" Three things I ask of thee;
And thy reply
Shall make thee or undo thee presently."

I said, " Say on,
Lord Death, thy will be done.
One answers now,
To bribe and fear indifferent as thou."

He said, " Behold,
My power is from of old.
The drunken sea
Is but a henchman and a serf to me.

" Hunger and war
My tireless sleuth-hounds are.
Before my nod
The quailing nations have no help but God.

" What hast thou found,
In one life's little round,
Stronger than these? "
I said, " One little hand-touch of Marie's."

He said, " Again:
Of all brave sights to men —
The glittering rain,
A towering city in an autumn plain,

" An eagle's flight,
A beacon-fire at night,
The harvest moon,
The burnish of a marching host at noon —

"What hast thou seen
In one life's small demesne,
Fairer than these?"
I said, "That supple body of Marie's."

He said, "Once more:
Of all men labour for,
Battle and yearn,
And spend their blessed days without return —

"Leisure or wealth,
Or power or sun-tanned health,
A bruited name,
Or the sad solace of a little fame —

"What hast thou known,
In one life's narrow zone,
Dearer than these?"
I said, "One little love-kiss of Marie's."

And then Death said,
"To-day among the dead
Thou shalt go down,
And with the wise receive thy just renown."

A MIDWINTER MEMORY.

Now the snow is on the roof,
Now the wind is in the flue,
Beauty, keep no more aloof,
Make my winter dreaming true,
Give my fancy proof.

How the year runs back to June,
To the day I saw you first!
In the sultry afternoon
There the mountains lay immersed
In a summer swoon.

In the orchard with your book,
I can see you now as then —

That serene and smiling look,
Far away and back again,
While my spirit shook.

Now the frost is on the pane,
And the winter on the sea,
Gold across the iron strain,
Thought of you comes back to me,
Like a lost refrain.

What a voice it was I heard!
All your j's were soft as d's,
Like the nest-notes of a bird,
And your fingers clasped your knees,
As you smiled each word.

Well I knew you for the one
Sought so long and never found,
In this country of the sun,

All these burning summers round.
There, the search was done!

Now the dark is at the door;
Now the snow is on the sill;
And for all I may deplore,
Time must have his ancient will —
Mar one lover more.

AN ANGEL IN PLASTER.

Dear smiling little snub-nosed baby face
With angel wings,
Be thou the guardian of this house, and grace
Its sublunary things.

Look laughing down, O blessed babe, and lend
That guileless charm,
That beaming joy, to sweeten and defend
Our dwelling from all harm.

Bid sorrow shun the threshold of this door,
And memory
Cease in this place forever to deplore
What has been — and must be.

Come sun or storm, come merriment or tears,
No care can fret
Thy radiant spirit, nor the heavy years
Invade it with regret.

Surely thou art a traveller from a land
That knows no grief!
The life of men thou canst not understand —
So turbulent, so brief.

Yet thou must tarry here, thou darling one,
To smile and bring
Thoughts of the world's fair youth, a fadeless sun
And a perpetual spring.

THE END.



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Carman, Bliss
From the Book of Valentines



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